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A MARBLE HEAD FROM CORINTH

[PLATES XIV–XV]

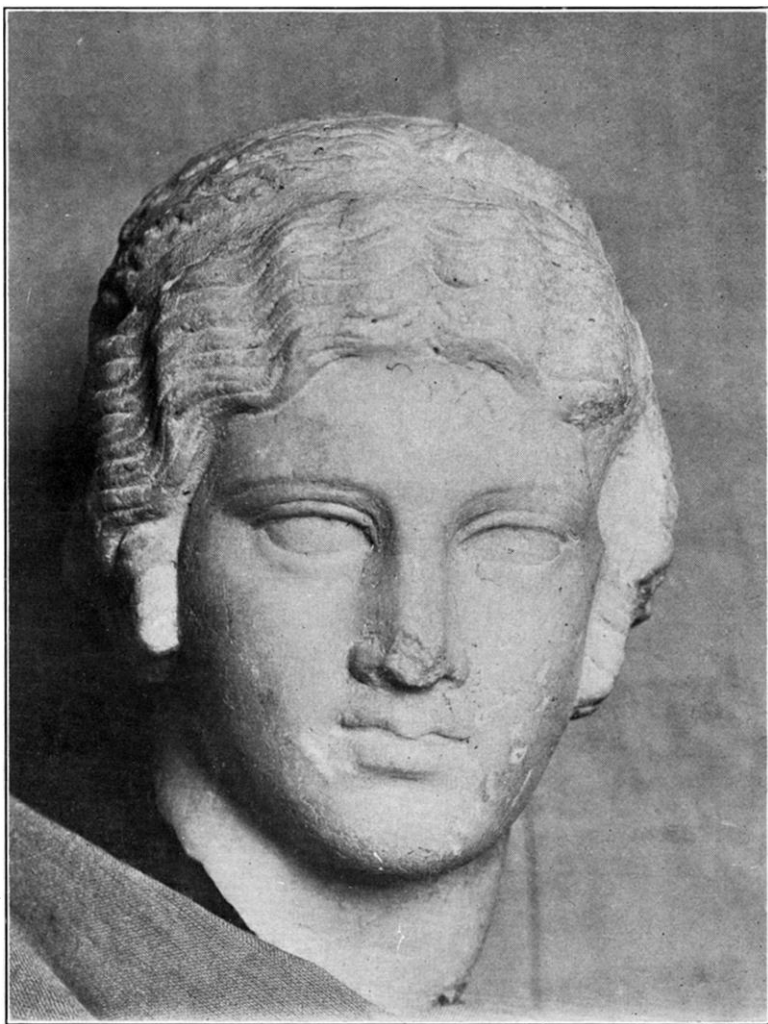
THE small female head here discussed was unearthed during the course of the excavations at Corinth in 1914. It was found embedded in dry earth which had come up originally as mud from the great drain running north from Peirene, and hence the circumstances of its discovery throw no light upon the period of the work itself.¹

The head is very small ²—0.14 m. from crown to break at base of neck, maximum width 0.085 m. The material is a fine-grained Pentelic marble, the crystals small, and the texture smooth and homogeneous. The work represents a girl of eighteen or thereabouts with a face of pure Greek type. The head is turned slightly to the right, and the gaze is directed downward toward a point not far distant. The hair, which is bound over the forward part of the crown by two nearly parallel fillets, is parted at the middle of the forehead and brought down in broad, simple waves across the brow (PLATE XIV). The waves extend back, however, only as far as the line of the front fillet, and behind this the hair is drawn back irregularly, as though to be gathered into a loose knot at the back of the head (PLATE XV). On each side of the face, where the hair, passing low across the temple, swells out over the ear, there rests upon the cheek a broad spiral curl.

The head itself is well preserved except for the rear portion, where a close examination of the break (PLATE XV) shows that the fragment did not belong originally to a statue in the round,

¹ I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. B. H. Hill for valuable criticism and suggestions, and to Mr. L. D. Caskey for the many courtesies extended to me at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

² Complete dimensions: length of face (from parting of hair to bottom of chin) 0.074 m.; width of face 0.06 m.; height of forehead 0.02 m.; length of nose 0.025 m.; from nose to bottom of chin 0.029 m.; greatest width of the broken surface at back of head 0.075 m.



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but is clearly from a work in high relief¹; the break at the rear is about in the plane of the original background surface. In addition to this break the tip of the nose is slightly battered, and a chip is missing from the hair just above the left temple.

In the matter of technique two points are worthy of attention. First, the drill, the free use of which is in itself an indication of comparative lateness,² is seen to have been employed extensively. Drill marks are apparent at the inner corners of the eyes, inside the nostrils, at the corners of the mouth, and in the middle of the upper lip; the opening of the left ear was also done with a drill of larger size. Furthermore, in the treatment of the eyes, the eye-balls, instead of being rounded regularly outward as in nature, are slightly flattened, with just a trace of working—a faint mark of incision—to indicate the outline of the iris (PLATE XIV).

In Roman portrait sculpture the practice of indicating iris and pupil by incision did not originate until after the close of the Flavian epoch. In none of the portraits of that or the earlier periods does this treatment of the eye appear.³ Later, however, in the time of Trajan and Hadrian, the custom of indicating iris and pupil by incision begins, and in its application a regular course of development can be traced: the cutting tends steadily to become deeper and more pronounced. At first the incision is very

¹ The height of the relief, as closely as can be determined from extant indications, was at least 0.085 m.

² *I.e.*, the *undisguised use* of the drill, little care being taken to conceal the traces even on flesh surfaces. But cf. Gardner's *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*, p. 22,—“the drill, according to Paus. I, 26, 7, was first used by Callimachus, who invented it in the latter part of the 5th. cent. B.C. But drill marks are to be found in the Aegina marbles (Brunn, *Geschichte d. gr. Künstler* I, 253).”—It should be noted, however, that the drill marks which appear on the Aegina marbles are of a very special sort, and have no real bearing on the technique of the sculptures themselves; in these marbles the *process* of sculpture owes nothing to the drill, *i.e.*, to carving or undercutting by means of the drill. When the drill is used at all, it is only for boring holes by which to attach external bronze accessories or ornaments such as girdles, collars, diadems, locks of hair, etc. The holes are large and fairly deep, perpendicular to the surface of the marble, generally uniform in size, and quite undisguised (inasmuch as the attached ornaments would effectually conceal them when in place). See Brunn-Bruckmann, *Denk. gr. und röm. Sculp.*, Nos. 23, 24, 25, 27, and 121.

³ Cf. Vatican, Sala dei Busti, No. 371 (Amelung, *Vat. Kat.*, II, pl. 69 left, lower left hand corner); also *ibid.*, No. 354 (Amelung, II, pl. 70, left, upper left hand corner); Cortile di Belvedere, No. 58 (Amelung, II, pl. 16); Museo Chiaramonti, No. 33 (Amelung, I, pl. 35 bottom, second from right).

light, the eyeball is flattened, and the eye is worked in a rather impressionistic manner.¹

It may be urged at this point that we are now speaking of portrait heads, whereas the particular work under discussion is manifestly not a portrait. This is true, but certain evidence indicates that, although the incision of the eyeball was at first confined to portraiture, it was soon extended to sculpture in general. It was certainly thoroughly established not later than the first part of the Antonine period.

From a merely cursory examination of the female portrait busts of the imperial period it is evident that certain distinct modes of hairdressing were in vogue during definite periods. Viewing these busts and the portraits which appear on coins of the Empire,² we see that the coiffure generally worn by Faustina the Younger³ resembles with striking exactitude that which appears on the head from Corinth. We have the same flat waving of the hair across the brow and temples, the same straight parting over the centre of the forehead, the waves at the side of the face are in both cases brought so low as to obscure the upper half of the ear, and—most striking of all—in a large number of the portraits of Faustina there appears just in front of the ear a small loop or curl projecting downward from below the edge of the wave which passes over the upper part of the ear.⁴ At the back of the head the hair is regularly gathered into a round medium-sized knot.

As an example of the characteristic "Faustina coiffure" appearing on works other than portraits of the two Faustinas, we might mention the bust of a woman, No. 77 in the Museo Chiaramonti.⁵ This belongs to the general type of Faustina the Elder, and in the treatment of the hair about the forehead and face shows a striking similarity to the Corinthian head. From a central parting the hair is brought down across the brow in

¹ Cf. Vatican, Sala dei Busti, No. 283 (Amelung, II, pl. 64, lower shelf, right, a bust of Hadrian); also *ibid.*, No. 357 (Amelung, II, pl. 70, left, lower right hand corner, a bust of Antinous); Galeria delle Statue, No. 271, a portrait called Poseidippos (Hekler, *Gk. and Rom. Portraits*, pl. 110a, and 111a; also Amelung, II, pl. 54, right, "Copie in der ersten Kaiserzeit").

² See 'Hairdressing of Roman Ladies as Illustrated on Coins,' by M. M. Evans in *Num. Chron.* 1906, pp. 37 ff.

³ Cf. Bernoulli, *Röm. Ikon.*, II, 2, pls. LIII, LIV, Münztaf. IV, No. 19 (cf. also Nos. 8, 9, and 10, Faustina the Elder).

⁴ Cf. *Num. Chron.* 1906, pl. IV., Nos. 38, 39, and 42.

⁵ Amelung, I, pl. 38, upper shelf, fourth from right; text, I, p. 361.

broad flat waves, the number and arrangement of which from centre to ear are the same in both cases. We notice also that the little curl appears in front of the ear, and, as in the Corinthian head, the upper part of the ear itself is hidden by the wave which passes over it. Save for rather harder, more realistic treatment and less artistic work, the "front hair" might be that of the head from Corinth.

The significance of the resemblance between these modes of hairdressing will perhaps be better appreciated when it is stated that, up to the time of Faustina the Elder, there is no instance in sculpture of a female coiffure in which we see the small curl in front of the ear combined with the broad flat waving of the hair across the forehead, temple, and side of the head.¹ This particular mode seems to be distinct and characteristic of its period, and its vogue was confined rather closely to the first three quarters of the second century A.D. But here again it might be objected that we are speaking of portraits, whereas the Corinthian head is not a portrait. However, there is ground for believing that the type of coiffure affected by the Faustinas had a distinct influence on contemporary sculpture. In Room XIV of the Lateran Museum is exhibited an ideal head²—of Demeter, perhaps, for it is crowned with a chaplet of wheat ears. In this work the arrangement of the hair over the forehead is practically identical with that of the Corinthian head, and the spiral curl also appears in front of the ear. On grounds of style, and from the indications of drill work, the head may be assigned to the Antonine period: it even seems that the eyeballs are very slightly worked, as in the head from Corinth. Other examples might be mentioned showing the influence of "the Faustina mode" on the general sculpture of the day, but the foregoing is sufficient to illustrate the point in question.

¹ Apparent exceptions: The well known "Sappho type" (see Baumgarten, Poland and Wagner, *Die Hellenische Kultur*, p. 187, fig. 158). Here, although we have a small single or double curl in front of the ear, it is treated in a quite different manner, and the hair across the brow is closely bound down by a complicated arrangement of fillets.—The "Berenice" of the Naples Museum (see Anton Hekler, *Gk. and Rom. Portraits*, pl. 65b). In this, the resemblance to the Corinthian head is more apparent than real. The hair is waved and rolled back from the brow naturally and irregularly, no formal or definite arrangement being followed. The small lock which appears on the cheek in front of the ear is neither curled nor looped; it is simply a stray wisp which is allowed to escape and rest naturally against the curve of the cheek.

² Seemingly unpublished.

As to the prototype of the Corinthian head—the earlier Greek type upon which it was modelled—there can be little doubt that this was archaic. The style of the head is so clearly archaistic, it harks back so evidently to the spirit of the early fifth century, that a model must be sought for it from among the works of that early period. Its prototype would seem to have been some such work as that exhibited in the Borghese Museum, a female statue, No. CCXVI in the Egyptian Room.¹ Here, although we note the central parting and the flat waving of the hair across the forehead, the essential difference in treatment is at once apparent; in the one we see true archaic formalism combined with simple minuteness of detail, in the other a studied simplicity which is indicative of a much later age. And this is still further carried out by the use of the double fillet; the front fillet of the Corinthian head occupies very nearly the same relative position as does the broad single band which passes about the head of the Borghese statue. There is a marked resemblance in minor details as well; the shape of the forehead and the general contour of the face is much the same, while the profile of the forehead, nose, lips, and mouth is very similar. At the side of the cheek, just in front of the ear, the hair is slightly looped and carried back and over the ear.

From the examples just quoted, and from the points of technique considered above, we may conclude that the head from Corinth is an archaistic work of the Antonine period. It is apparent that its author was seeking to obtain an archaic effect without indulging in any absolute archaisms. The long, parallel, graved lines running down the waves of hair across the forehead add a touch of formalism which is strikingly archaic,² and this impression is much heightened by the use of the double fillet.³ It seems probable that the sculptor of the Corinthian

¹ Helbig, *Führer* (edit. 1912–13), No. 1558; Brunn-Bruckmann, *Denkmäler*, Nos. 261, 262: Helbig says "Der Kopf ist antik aber stark abgeputzt und nicht zugehörig. . . . Der ebenfalls archaische Typus des. . . . Kopfes, der leider durch rücksichtsloses Putzen des Ergänzers und vor allem durch die Verkleinerung der Nase, entstellt worden ist, erinnert an den Kopf der von Euthydikos geweihten Kore auf der athenischen Akropolis." For the Acropolis "kore" see Gardner's *Handbook of Gk. Sculp.*, p. 188; also S. Reinach, *Têtes Antiques*, pl. 13, p. 11.

² Cf. the Acropolis "kore," Gardner, *loc. cit.*

³ The double fillet appears early in Greek sculpture and was much used during the classic period. It appears practically always on the copies and later types derived from the Cnidian Aphrodite,—on the Niobids, the Berenice of the Naples Museum, etc.

head took as his model a work of about the same type as the head of the Borghese statue. The resemblance in effect between the two can hardly be otherwise explained.

As regards the composition to which the Corinthian head once belonged, the position of the eyes indicates that it must have formed part of a group. Judging from the repose of the face, its strength, and the lack of any trace of passion, we might hazard the guess that the subject represented was an Artemis,—but this is mere conjecture.

Although we find we have been dealing with a work belonging to a period of sculpture ordinarily looked upon as hopelessly degenerate, it may be remarked in closing that in this head from Corinth we have proof that the Greek spirit had not yet entirely passed away. The work is truly Greek, though but an echo of the greater period that had gone before.

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